

# Kewa language

**Kewa** is an Engan language complex of the Southern Highlands province of Papua New Guinea.

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## Kewa pandanus register

Kewa's elaborate pandanus avoidance register, which is used only in the forest during the karuka harvest, has been extensively documented.<sup>[3]</sup> The grammar is regularized and the vocabulary is restricted, with about a thousand words that differ from normal language. This was first described by Karl J. Franklin in 1972.<sup>[4]</sup>

Pandanus-register words have a broader semantic scope. For example, *yoyo*, a reduplication of *yo* 'leaf', refers to hair, ear, breast, and scrotum, all things which hang from the body as pandanus leaves hang from the tree. *Palaa*, 'limb,' (either thigh or branch) is used for any reference to trees, including root, firewood, and fire. (Even in normal Kewa, *repena* means both 'tree' and 'fire'.) *Maeye* or 'crazy' refers to any non-human animal except dogs. It contrasts with the rational world of humans.

Many words are coined from Kewa morphology but have idiosyncratic meanings in the forest. *Aayagopa*, from *aa* 'man', *yago* 'fellow', and *pa* 'to do, to make', refers to man, knee, skin, and neck. Many idiosyncratic phrases are then built on this word. For example, *ni madi aayagopa-si* (I carry man-DIM) means "my father".

The grammar has also been simplified. Clause-linking morphology is lost and replaced by simple juxtaposition of the clauses. In standard Kewa, there are two sets of verbal endings, one indicating actions done for the speaker's benefit. That set is missing from the pandanus language. The other inflection differs somewhat. For example, the forms of 'to be' are:

	Normal Kewa			Pandanus register		
	Singular	Dual	Plural	Singular	Dual	Plural
1st person	ni pi	saa pipa	niaa pima	ni mupi	saa mupapana	niaa mupapana
2nd person	ne pi			ne mupa		
3rd person	nipu pia		nimu pimi	aayagopa mupia		aayagopanu pupipa

(The *-nu* in *aayagopanu* is a collective suffix.)

Kewa	
Region	Southern Highlands, Papua New Guinea
Native speakers	100,000 (2001 census) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	<div>Engan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>South<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Kewa</b></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Variously: <div>kjy – Erave (South)</div> <div>kjs – East</div> <div>kew – Pasuma (West)</div>
Glottolog	kewa1250 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kewa1250">http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/kewa1250</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Notes

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1. Erave (South) (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kjy/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
East (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kjs/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
Pasuma (West) (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kew/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Kewa" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kewa1250>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Foley, William (1986). *The Papuan Languages of New Guinea*. Cambridge University Press. p. 43.
4. Franklin (1972)

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- Franklin, K.J. (1968). *The Dialects of Kewa* (<http://sealang.net/archives/pl/pdf/PL-B10.pdf>) (PDF). Pacific Linguistics Series B - No. 10. Pacific Linguistics. doi:10.15144/pl-b10 (<https://doi.org/10.15144%2Fpl-b10>). hdl:1885/146440 (<https://hdl.handle.net/1885%2F146440>).
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## External links

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- Materials on East Kewa are included in the open access Arthur Capell collections (AC1 (<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC1>) and AC2 (<http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/AC2>)) held by Paradisec.
- Kewa – English Dictionary ([http://www-01.sil.org/pacific/png/pubs/928474531046/Kewa\\_English\\_dict.pdf](http://www-01.sil.org/pacific/png/pubs/928474531046/Kewa_English_dict.pdf))

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